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Actions by FBI aided in conviction of Chin

By Bill Gertz
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FBI interrogations of Larry Wu-Tai Chin appeared to play a major role in the speedy trial and conviction on espionage charges of the former CIA translator.

The case of the naturalized Chinese-born American hinged on statements Chin made to FBI agents during questioning shortly before his arrest on Nov. 22. Chin admitted he spied for Communist China and offered to return to China as a "double agent," according to court papers.

A jury in U.S. District Court in Alexandria deliberated for a little over three hours Friday before finding Chin guilty of 17 counts of espionage, tax evasion and banking charges. The charges stemmed from what Assistant U.S. Attorney

Joseph Aronica described as Chin's career as a "mole" for Communist China.

Next in the continuing series of spy trials is that of former Navy communications specialist Jerry A. Whitworth, accused of being a member of the espionage ring operated by convicted spy John Walker. Mr. Whitworth is scheduled to go on trial next week in San Francisco. He has pleaded not guilty to 13 counts of espionage and tax evasion for his alleged role in supplying Navy communications secrets to the Soviets.

In the Chin case, jury selection and the trial lasted only five days. Chin's lawyer, Jacob Stein, said his client would appeal the verdict.

Chin, 63, could be sentenced to two life terms plus up to 87 years and fined up to \$3.3 million. U.S. District Judge Robert Merhige delayed setting a sentencing date pending re-

ceipt of a sentencing report.

Judge Merhige advised the jury prior to deliberations not to confuse motive with intent.

"Good motive alone is never an excuse," he said. "Intent is whether the defendant knew at the time he was doing it that it was unlawful."

Chin used a novel defense. He admitted supplying documents to Chinese intelligence operatives, but defended the espionage as private diplomacy aimed at improving U.S.-Chinese relations. He said the espionage helped promote pro-Western communist officials.

His \$10,000-per year payments and lump sums of up to \$150,000 were a "byproduct of my mission," he said during testimony.

Mr. Aronica countered by pointing out that Chin supplied information on Chinese prisoners of war in Korea at a time when Maoist ideology was firmly entrenched in China.

"It is an incredible case," Mr. Aronica told jurors. "He has confessed that, in essence, he was a mole for 30 years." A mole is a deep-cover intelligence agent operating inside another government.